
Introduction: Workforce Issues in Library and Information Science

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Beyond buildings, collections, and services, the library and information science (LIS) workforce is key to the success of many aspects of a knowledge economy. LIS professionals partner with educators in the instruction of youth and young adults, support reading and information literacy required for productive participation in society over the life course, enable research and development through access to research findings and translational systems, and promote commerce through Web development and organization and retrieval of information, to name just a few of their service objectives. Whereas librarianship has a long history as a profession, the expanded field of library and information science presents many new opportunities for information professionals to work in non-library settings.

Occupational employment data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2008) estimate that there are 151,170 librarians, 113,510 library technicians, 5,330 archivists, and 3,960 library science post-secondary faculty in the workforce (not including self-employed workers). The American Library Association (2009) estimates the number employed in academic, public, and school libraries at 329,941. Library and information science professionals working outside of libraries are much harder to identify and their numbers tend to be spread among various occupational categories. The U.S. National Center for Education Statistics (2008) reports that there were 6,767 master's degrees in library science conferred by degree-granting institutions in the academic year 2006–7. While the number of degrees has been slowly increasing since the late 1990s, the supply of new graduates does not appear to be adequate for the number of retirements that will take place as the baby boomers leave the workforce. According to Dohm (2000), the impact of the retirement of seventy-six million boomers on U.S. labor supply will be greatest in the decade following 2008. As

shown in table 1, Dohm (2000) presented Bureau of Labor Statistics data that placed librarians seventh on a list of occupations with the highest percentage of workers aged forty-five years and older in 1998, at which time the median age of librarians was forty-seven, compared to age thirty-nine for all twenty-four occupations on the list.

Concern continues to be expressed about potential LIS workforce shortages, given the expected baby boomer retirements, and the need for increased recruitment, diversity, succession planning, and leadership development in the profession. Less attention has been paid to retention of LIS professionals at various career stages, although this is another strategy that is worthy of consideration, given the nature of the workforce challenges that lie ahead. Given this concern, it is an ideal time for an issue of *Library Trends* that begins to take stock of some of the major issues related to the LIS workforce and to lay a foundation for future research and workforce planning at all levels.

In 2004, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) initiated the 21st Century Librarian Program, which made workforce research a priority. In the same year, IMLS funded a national study on the Future of Librarians in the Workforce being conducted by Griffiths, et al. (www.libraryworkforce.org). The national study aims to project the supply and demand for librarians and to provide data from a wide variety of surveys of libraries, library employees, employers, career counselors, educators, and other groups. In 2005, IMLS funded another large scale workforce study by Marshall, et al. (www.wilis.unc.edu), which provided an in-depth look at the careers of graduates of the six LIS programs in North Carolina from 1964–2007. A follow-up study known as WILIS 2 is using the recent graduates' portion of the full retrospective career study as a basis for creating an alumni tracking survey that a wide range of LIS programs can potentially use.

Other major LIS research studies have also been undertaken by the 8Rs Research Team in Canada (2005) and the Colorado State Library (Steffen, Lance, Russell, & Lietzau, 2004). In 2004, the Archival Census and Education Needs Survey in the United States, also funded by IMLS, was conducted by the Society of American Archivists (2006). This study collected and analyzed data on the careers of archivists and their graduate education and continuing education needs, as well as leadership, diversity issues, and certification issues in the archival profession. The availability of these data sources makes it an ideal time to broaden the discussion of workforce issues in the field.

The collection of articles in this issue of *Library Trends* represents an initial attempt to bring together works that discuss key projects and research issues that can be explored using the available data. Having the articles together in a single issue gives a sense of the scope and complexity of the workforce issues facing the field and the potential of research to

Table 1. Occupations in 1998 with the Highest Percentage of Workers Aged 45 Years and Older

	Total employed (in thousands)	Percent of employed 45 years and older	Median age
Total, all employees	131,995	33.7	39
Farmers, except horticultural	946	68.5	53
Construction	71	60.6	49
Real estate sales occupations	753	59.8	49
Administrators and officials, public administration	632	58.7	47
Clergy	327	56.9	48
Millwrights	83	56.6	46
Librarians	209	56.5	47
Administrators, education and related fields	754	56.1	47
Bus drivers	474	54.2	47
Dressmakers	68	52.9	46
Dentists	156	51.3	45
Stationary engineers	130	50.8	45
Teachers, secondary school	1,228	50.3	45
Counselors, educational and vocational	231	50.2	45
Managers, properties and real estate	521	49.9	45
Psychologists	233	49.4	45
Crane and tower operators	67	49.3	45
Management analysts	443	49.0	45
Telephone installers and repairers	232	48.7	45
Authors	130	48.5	45
Private household cleaners and servants	555	48.3	44
Inspectors and compliance officers, ex. construc.	238	47.5	44
Tool and die makers	135	46.7	44
Taxi cab drivers and chauffeurs	275	46.5	44

*Reproduced from table 1, Dohm, 2000.

inform workforce planning at all levels. We hope that this issue will stimulate discussion, lead to the sharing of additional research results and best practices, and inform future planning for all stakeholders.

In addition to previous research in the LIS field, the WILIS study and its approach was inspired by the life course perspective from sociology; thus, the first article in this issue provides an overview of this framework. The authors argue that the life course perspective is particularly suitable for studies of the LIS workforce and, as such, may be of interest to other LIS researchers in the future. Educators and employers may also find the framework useful for understanding the dynamics of the LIS workforce, past, present, and future. This initial article presents ideas underlying the life course perspective and the process of translating this theoretic-

cal orientation into the design and data collection strategy in order to gain insight into the contextual aspects of the respondents' work lives. The second article, entitled "Where Are They Now?" provides an overview of the methodology and findings from the Workforce Issues in Library and Information Science 1 (WILIS 1) study, which surveyed graduates (1964–2007) of the six LIS programs in North Carolina to understand their career progression. Since LIS does not have a consistent approach to annual licensing at the state or national levels, we do not have comprehensive workforce data. The WILIS study provided data on the whereabouts of a large cohort of LIS graduates, and explored their careers to date and their plans for the future. A WILIS methodology article follows, with details of the data collection approach taken to finding alumni, developing a complex online survey (which obtained information on up to five jobs in a career, among other workforce related information), and learning about the representativeness of the respondents through a non-response study.

The next two articles examine studies that helped to inspire the development of the WILIS1 project. The first of these articles reports on the motivation for, results, and impact of the Canadian 8Rs study. The 8Rs are recruitment, retention, retirement, reaccreditation (entry-level education), rejuvenation (midcareer professional renewal), repatriation (focused on Canadian librarians leaving Canada for jobs in the United States), remuneration (benefits of the profession), and restructuring (efforts to reorganize staff or services to deal with new technologies or financial exigencies). This is followed by an article on the 3Rs study in Colorado, which focuses on recruitment, retention, and retirement issues.

The remaining articles provide examples of how large data sets can be used to explore a variety of specific topics. For example, the first article in this series focuses on the issue of diversity and incorporates data from the WILIS study as well as data from other sources. The authors look, in particular, at factors that may impact the recruitment of a diverse LIS workforce. Another article takes a new look at the acceptance of women administrators in academic libraries in a follow-up to several earlier studies. This article is followed by one reporting on the history of the development of Allied Professional Association (APA) as an affiliate of the American Library Association (ALA). One of the purposes of the APA, in addition to offering professional certification programs, is to conduct periodic salary surveys, and this article reports data related to salary differences, for example, by gender.

The next two articles focus on different areas of LIS practice—school and public libraries—and the particular challenges associated with each. Each of these practice areas contributes in different ways and, consequently, has different workforce requirements. School librarians are both educators and librarians and have a variety of professional roles and de-

mands unlike other specialties. Public librarians have a strong service orientation to the communities they serve and the wide range of age groups they serve: children, teens, young adults, adults, and the growing older adult population. In addition to offering collections in support of pleasure and other reading, public librarians play an important role in providing access to technology and meeting the general, employment, health, legal, financial, leisure, and educational information needs of their patrons. A common theme across the responses of LIS professionals in all specialty areas is the relationship between autonomy, opportunities for professional growth and development, and job satisfaction. These matters are addressed in the antepenultimate article. A question raised in many of the articles in this issue relates to the possible influences of the economic downturn that began in 2008. Unlike previous downturns, this one is affecting employment in all sectors of the North American economy. The penultimate article explores this issue by looking at the effects of past economic recessions on LIS careers, in terms of earnings and job stability.

The final article points to the future by introducing efforts to continue to collect workforce data through periodic surveys of alumni of programs within North America that educate LIS professionals. Since this project is a follow up to the first WILIS study, the label WILIS 2 is used to acknowledge the fact that the WILIS 1 experience provided the basis for the WILIS 2 approach.

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